

As the summer goes on, I'm continuing to fight for our furloughed federal civilian employees. This week, I heard from so many of you that are losing 20% of your income until September 30, as federal government employee furloughs continue. On Tuesday, the Department of Defense (DoD) officials came to brief members of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) on the furlough situation as a whole. As Chairman of HASC's Readiness Subcommittee, I requested this briefing because I remain concerned that furloughs are both unnecessary and detrimental to our military's readiness. The brave citizens who have been tasked with defending this nation, whether in or out of uniform, deserve answers and solutions. It seems to me that Congress continues to duck and dodge from addressing one of the most important issues: sequestration. However, I was pleased to vote for legislation this week that would prohibit furloughs by the DoD for the next fiscal year, which begins on October 1, 2013. Political gamesmanship and indiscriminate furloughs have no place in governance. I believe Congress has an opportunity and an obligation to do the right thing and truly address out-of-control spending in a responsible way - not on the backs of dedicated patriots working for the DoD or any federal government agency.

Also during the month of July, the House acted to delay several burdensome provisions of Obamacare. I feel strongly that health care in this country must be reformed, but I will continue to oppose Obamacare and its harmful provisions. I was proud to support the Authority for Mandate Act (H.R. 2667), which delays the requirement that businesses with over 50 full-time employees provide minimum essential health care coverage to employees or face a fine. The rush to implement something like this will have nothing but negative consequences for individuals, families, and the small businesses that employ so many of our neighbors. A second bill, the Fairness for American Families Act (H.R. 2668), would in turn suspend the provision known as the individual mandate, which requires that all citizens purchase health coverage or pay a penalty tax. I am also a cosponsor of H.R. 2682, the Defund Obamacare Act of 2013. I have long argued that the goal of any health care reform must be to drive costs down so that quality health care coverage is affordable and accessible to every American. Since the health care overhaul was signed into law, costs have gone up, and folks continue to lose coverage due to the regulations within this law. I continue to support responsible, commonsense reforms that target the true factors driving up health care costs for individuals. Any reforms must ensure that doctors and patients, not insurance companies or government bureaucrats, are the ones making important health care decisions. I will continue to work with my constituents and press Congress to pursue true solutions to address our nation's rising health care costs.

As we move closer to the August district work period, while I always look forward to spending

more time with you and the good folks in the district, I continue to urge my colleagues to stay in Washington to ensure the nation's business is finished. I believe Congress should not leave during the month of August, but should remain in Washington to get the job done and will oppose adjourning just as I did last August. It is important to connect with constituents, and I am fortunate to be able to drive home each night and stay connected with reality. However, unfinished business should be addressed. Congress has a job to do and should not leave until the job is done.

The main streets of Virginia's First District are full of ideas to get our economy back on track, and your feedback is critically important to me as I serve you. I can be reached by telephone at (202) 225-4261, through my website (www.wittman.house.gov), on Facebook (www.facebook.com/reprobwittman), and via Twitter (www.twitter.com/robwittman).

Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He serves on the House Natural Resources Committee and the House Armed Services Committee where he is the Chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee.